

DESCRIPTION**POLARIZER, OPTICAL FILM, AND IMAGE DISPLAY****Technical Field**

5 The present invention relates to a polarizer. This invention also relates to a polarizing plate and an optical film using the polarizer concerned. Furthermore, this invention relates to an image display, such as a liquid crystal display, an organic electroluminescence display, a CRT and a PDP using the
10 polarizing plate and the optical film concerned.

Background Art

 Liquid crystal display are rapidly developing in market, such as in clocks and watches, cellular phones, PDAs,
15 notebook-sized personal computers, and monitor for personal computers, DVD players, TVs, etc. In the liquid crystal display, visualization is realized based on a variation of polarization state by switching of a liquid crystal, where polarizers are used based on a display principle thereof. Particularly, usage for TV etc.
20 increasingly requires display with high luminance and high contrast, polarizers having higher brightness (high transmittance) and higher contrast (high polarization degree) are being developed and introduced. Very high reliability in heat resistance is especially required by a liquid display that is assumed
25 to be used in a severe environment outdoors, such as cellular

phones or PDAs, and a liquid display for vehicle navigation, a liquid crystal projector or the like.

As a polarizer, there has been widely used, for example, an iodine containing polarizer having a structure obtained by causing iodine to be adsorbed to polyvinyl alcohol and stretching the polyvinyl alcohol because of having a high transmittance and a high polarization degree. In the iodine -based polarizer, an iodine compound formed in a stretch step and working as a dichroic material is low in thermal stability. The iodine compound is modified very much and a dichroic performance is lowered in a test in which the compound is left in an atmosphere at 100°C for a long time which simulates an environment on a dash board in an automobile in the middle of summer, which has resulted in a problem of a great decrease in function as a polarizer. Therefore, a dye-based polarizer using a dichroic dye instead of the iodine compound has been prevailed in a field having a strong requirement for reliability in heat resistance such as an application on a vehicle (see, for example, JP-A No. 62-123405).

The dichroic dye is; however, lower in absorption dichroic ratio than the iodine compound. Therefore, the dye-based polarizer is a little inferior in characteristic to the iodine-based polarizer. Adsorption of the dye easily causes unevenness in color dyeing and a state of uneven dispersion. Especially, when a black display is performed in a liquid crystal display, a mottled black display are presented, which has led to a problem of a great

reduction in visibility.

In order to cope with this problem, a proposal has been made of a dye-based polarizer in which a quantity of adsorption or addition of dye is increased to lower a transmittance in black display to a perception limit or less with a human naked eye. The dye-based polarizer, however, lowers a transmittance in white display at the same time as a transmittance in black display, which causes a display itself to be darkened. Another proposal has been made of a production method for a dye-based polarizer in which a stretch process hard to generate unevenness is adopted (see, for example, JP-A No. 8-190015). The method, however, requires replacing a process proper, resulting in a reduced productivity.

Disclosure of Invention

It is an object of the present invention to provide a dye-based polarizer having a high transmittance and a high polarization degree, capable of suppressing unevenness of transmittance in black display and excellent in reliability in heat resistance.

Besides, it is an object of the present invention to provide a polarizing plate and an optical film using the polarizer concerned. Furthermore, it is an object of the present invention to provide an image display using the polarizer, the polarizing plate, and the optical film concerned.

As a result of examination wholeheartedly performed by

the present inventors that the above-mentioned subject should be solved, it was found out that the above-mentioned purpose might be attained using polarizers shown below, leading to completion of this invention.

5 That is, this invention relates to a polarizer comprising a film having a structure having a minute domain dispersed in a matrix formed of a translucent thermoplastic resin including an absorption dichroic dye,

10 wherein a transmittance to a linearly polarized light in a transmission direction is 80% or more,

 a haze value is 10% or less, and

 a haze value to a linearly polarized light in an absorption direction is 50% or more.

15 The minute domain of the above-mentioned polarizer is preferably formed by an oriented birefringent material. The above-mentioned birefringent material preferably shows liquid crystallinity at least in orientation processing step.

20 The above-mentioned polarizer of this invention secures reliability in heat resistance to use a dye based polarizer formed by a translucent thermoplastic resin and an absorption dichroic dye as a matrix. And minute domains are dispersed in the above-mentioned matrix. Minute domains are preferably formed by oriented materials having birefringence, and particularly minute domains are formed preferably with materials showing liquid crystallinity. Thus, in addition to function of absorption

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dichroic by absorption dichroic dye, characteristics of having function of scattering anisotropy improve polarization performance according to synergistic effect of the two functions, and as a result a polarizer having both of transmittance and polarization degree, and excellent visibility may be provided.

In the above-mentioned polarizers, a transmittance to a linearly polarized light in a transmission direction is 80% or more, a haze value is 10% or less, and a haze value to a linearly polarized light in an absorption direction is 50% or more.

A dye-based polarizer of this invention having the above-mentioned transmittance and haze value has a high transmittance and excellent visibility for linearly polarized light in a transmission direction, and has strong optical diffusibility for linearly polarized light in an absorption direction. Therefore, without sacrificing other optical properties and using a simple method, it may demonstrate a high transmittance and a high polarization degree, and may control unevenness of the transmittance in the case of black display.

As a polarizer of this invention, a polarizer is preferable that has as high as possible transmittance to linearly polarized light in a transmission direction, that is, linearly polarized light in a direction perpendicular to a direction of maximal absorption of the above-mentioned absorption dichroic dye, and that has 80% or more of light transmittance when an optical intensity of incident linearly polarized light is set to 100. The light

transmittance is preferably 85% or more, and still preferably 88% or more. Here, a light transmittance is equivalent to a value Y calculated from a spectral transmittance in 380 nm to 780 nm measured using a spectrophotometer with an integrating sphere based on CIE 1931 XYZ standard colorimetric system. In addition, since about 8% to 10% is reflected by an air interface on a front surface and rear surface of a polarizer, an ideal limit is a value in which a part for this surface reflection is deducted from 100%.

It is desirable that a polarizer does not scatter linearly polarized light in a transmission direction in the view point of obtaining clear visibility of a display image. Accordingly, the polarizer preferably has 10% or less of haze value to the linearly polarized light in the transmission direction, more preferably 5% or less, and still more preferably 3% or less. On the other hand, in the view point of covering unevenness by a local transmittance variation by scattering, a polarizer desirably scatters strongly linearly polarized light in an absorption direction, that is, linearly polarized light in a direction for a maximal absorption of the above-mentioned absorption dichroic dye. Accordingly, a haze value to the linearly polarized light in the absorption direction is preferably 50% or more, more preferably 60% or more, and still more preferably 70% or more. In addition, the haze value here is measured based on JIS K 7136 (how to obtain a haze of plastics-transparent material).

The above-mentioned optical properties are obtained by compounding a function of scattering anisotropy with a function of an absorption dichroic of the polarizer. As is indicated in U.S. Pat. No. 2123902 specification, JP-A No.9-274108, and JP-A No.9-297204, same characteristics may probably be attained also in a way that a scattering anisotropic film having a function to selectively scatter only linearly polarized light, and a dichroic absorption type polarizer are superimposed in an axial arrangement so that an axis providing a greatest scattering and an axis providing a greatest absorption may be parallel to each other. These methods, however, require necessity for separate formation of a scattering anisotropic film, have a problem of precision in axial joint in case of superposition, and furthermore, a simple superposition method does not provide increase in effect of the above-mentioned optical path length of the polarized light absorbed as is expected, and as a result, the method cannot easily attain a high transmission and a high polarization degree.

In the above-mentioned polarizer, it is preferable that the minute domains have a birefringence of 0.02 or more. In materials used for minute domains, in the view point of gaining larger anisotropic scattering function, materials having the above-mentioned birefringence may be preferably used.

In the above-mentioned polarizer, in a refractive index difference between the birefringent material forming the minute

domains and the translucent thermoplastic resin in each optical axis direction, a refractive index difference (Δn^1) in direction of axis showing a maximum is 0.03 or more, and a refractive index difference (Δn^2) between the Δn^1 direction and a direction of axes of two directions perpendicular to the Δn^1 direction is 50% or less of the Δn^1 .

Control of the above-mentioned refractive index difference (Δn^1) and (Δn^2) in each optical axis direction into the above-mentioned range may provide a scattering anisotropic film having function being able to selectively scatter only linearly polarized light in the Δn^1 direction, as is submitted in U.S. Pat. No. 2123902 specification. That is, on one hand, having a large refractive index difference in the Δn^1 direction, it may scatter linearly polarized light, and on the other hand, having a small refractive index difference in the Δn^2 direction, and it may transmit linearly polarized light. Moreover, refractive index differences (Δn^2) in the directions of axes of two directions perpendicular to the Δn^1 direction are preferably equal.

In order to obtain high scattering anisotropy, a refractive index difference (Δn^1) in a Δn^1 direction is set 0.03 or more, preferably 0.05 or more, and still preferably 0.10 or more. A refractive index difference (Δn^2) in two directions perpendicular to the Δn^1 direction is 50% or less of the above-mentioned Δn^1 , and preferably 30% or less.

In absorption dichroic dye in the above-mentioned

polarizer, an absorption axis of the material concerned preferably is orientated in the Δn^1 direction.

The absorption dichroic dye in a matrix is orientated so that an absorption axis of the material may become parallel to the above-mentioned Δn^1 direction, and thereby linearly polarized light in the Δn^1 direction as a scattering polarizing direction may be selectively absorbed. As a result, a linearly polarized light component of incident light in a Δn^2 direction transmits without scattering. On the other hand, a linearly polarized light component in the Δn^1 direction is scattered, and is absorbed by the absorption dichroic dye. Usually, absorption is determined by an absorption coefficient and a thickness. The polarizer of the present invention has pretension thickness is thick because of scattering of light, polarized component in the Δn^1 direction is more absorbed as compared with a case where scattering is not given. That is, higher polarization degrees may be attained with same transmittances.

Descriptions for ideal models will, hereinafter, be given. Two main transmittances usually used for linear polarizer (a first main transmittance k_1 (a maximum transmission direction = linearly polarized light transmittance in a Δn^2 direction), a second main transmittance k_2 (a minimum transmission direction = linearly polarized light transmittance in a Δn^1 direction)) are, hereinafter, used to give discussion.

In commercially available dye-based polarizers, when

absorption dichroic dyes are oriented in one direction, a parallel transmittance and a polarization degree may be represented as follows, respectively:

parallel transmittance = $0.5 \times ((k_1)^2 + (k_2)^2)$ and

5 polarization degree = $(k_1 - k_2) / (k_1 + k_2)$.

On the other hand, when it is assumed that, in a polarizer of this invention, a polarized light in a Δn^1 direction is scattered and an average optical path length is increased by a factor of α (> 1), and depolarization by scattering may be ignored, main
10 transmittances in this case may be represented as k_1 and $k_2' = 10^x$ (where, x is $\alpha \log k_2$), respectively

That is, a parallel transmittance in this case and the polarization degree are represented as follows:

parallel transmittance = $0.5 \times ((k_1)^2 + (k_2')^2)$ and

15 polarization degree = $(k_1 - (k_2')^2) / ((k_1 + (k_2')^2))$.

When a polarizer of this invention is prepared by a same condition (an amount of dyeing and production procedure are same) as in commercially available dye-based polarizers (parallel transmittance 0.321, polarization degree 0.90: $k_1 = 0.80$, $k_2 = 0.04$), on calculation, when α is 2 times, a characteristics having
20 a parallel transmittance 0.320, a polarization degree 0.996, is obtained. If a concentration of an absorption dichroic material is reduced with a fixed polarization degree of 0.90, a parallel transmittance can be increased to 0.406.

25 The above-mentioned result is on calculation, and function

may decrease a little by effect of depolarization caused by scattering, surface reflection, backscattering, etc. To reveal the above-mentioned function effectively, less backscattering is preferable, and a ratio of backscattering strength to incident light strength is preferably 30% or less, and more preferably 20% or less.

As the above-mentioned polarizers, films manufactured by stretching may suitably be used.

In the above-mentioned polarizer, minute domains preferably have a length in a Δn^2 direction of 0.05 to 500 μm .

In order to scatter strongly linearly polarized light having a plane of vibration in a Δn^1 direction in wavelengths of visible light band, dispersed minute domains have a length controlled to 0.05 to 500 μm in a Δn^2 direction, and preferably controlled to 0.5 to 100 μm . When the length in the Δn^2 direction of the minute domains is too short compared with wavelengths, scattering may not fully provided. On the other hand, when the length in the Δn^2 direction of the minute domains is too long, there is a possibility that a problem of decrease in film strength or of liquid crystalline material forming minute domains not fully oriented in the minute domains may arise.

In the above-mentioned polarizer, preferably adopted is a liquid crystalline thermoplastic resin showing up a state of a nematic phase or smectic phase in a temperature region lower than the glass transition temperature of a translucent thermoplastic

resin as the birefringent material forming the minute domain.

In the above-mentioned polarizer, as the birefringent material forming the minute domain preferably used is a product obtained by polymerization after aligning a liquid crystalline monomer showing up a state of a nematic phase or smectic phase in a temperature region lower than the glass transition temperature of a translucent thermoplastic resin.

In the above-mentioned polarizer, the absorption dichroic dye is preferably a dye having at least one absorption band with a dichroic ratio of 3 or more in the visible light wavelength region.

Used as a measure evaluating a dichroic ratio is, for example, an absorption dichroic ratio at the absorption maximum wavelength in a polarization absorption spectrum measured using a liquid crystal cell in homogenous alignment prepared using a proper liquid crystal material in which a dye is dissolved. In the evaluation method, a dye used, for example, in a case where E-7 manufactured by Merck Co. is used as a standard liquid crystal, preferably has a dichroic ratio at the absorption wavelength of, usually, 3 or more, preferably 6 or more and more preferably 9 or more as an aim value.

Besides, this invention relates to a polarizing plate which comprising a transparent protective layer at least on one side of the above-mentioned polarizer.

Moreover, this invention relates to an optical film comprising at least one of the above-mentioned polarizer or the

above-mentioned polarizing plate.

Furthermore, this invention relates to an image display comprising the above-mentioned polarizer, the above-mentioned polarizing plate, or the above-mentioned optical film.

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Brief Description of Drawing

Fig. 1 is conceptual view showing an example of a polarizer of this invention.

Best Mode for Carrying Out of the Invention

A polarizer of this invention will, hereinafter, be described referring to drawings. Fig. 1 is a conceptual view of a polarizer of this invention, and the polarizer has a structure where a film is formed with a translucent thermoplastic resin 1 including an absorption dichroic dye 2, and minute domains 3 are dispersed in the film concerned as a matrix. In such a way, the polarizer of the invention has an absorption dichroic dye 2 present in a translucent thermoplastic resin 1 of which a film, which is a matrix, was made and the absorption dichroic dye 2 can also be present so as not to exert an optical influence on minute domains 3.

Fig. 1 shows an example of a case where the absorption dichroic dye 2 is oriented in a direction of axis (Δn^1 direction) in which a refractive index difference between the minute domain 3 and the translucent thermoplastic resin 1 shows a maximal value. In minute domain 3, a polarized component in the Δn^1 direction

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is scattered. In Fig. 1, the Δn^1 direction in one direction in a film plane is an absorption axis. In the film plane, a Δn^2 direction perpendicular to the Δn^1 direction serves as a transmission axis. Another Δn^2 direction perpendicular to the Δn^1 direction is a thickness direction.

As translucent thermoplastic resins 1, resins having translucency in a visible light band and dispersing and adsorbing the absorption dichroic dyes may be used without particular limitation. For example, polyvinyl alcohols or derivatives thereof conventionally used for polarizers may be mentioned. As derivatives of polyvinyl alcohol, polyvinyl formals, polyvinyl acetals, etc. may be mentioned, and in addition derivatives modified with olefins, such as ethylene and propylene, and unsaturated carboxylic acids, such as acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, and crotonic acid, alkyl esters of unsaturated carboxylic acids, acrylamides etc. may be mentioned.

Examples of translucent thermoplastic resins 1 include: polyester-based resins such as polyethylene terephthalate and polyethylene naphthalate; styrene-based resins such as polystyrene and acrylonitrile styrene copolymer (AS resin); and olefin-based resins such as polyethylene, polypropylene, a polyolefin with cyclo or norbornene structure and an ethylene propylene copolymer. Examples further include: a vinyl chloride-based resin, a cellulose-based resin, an acrylic-based resin, an amide-based resin, an imide-based resin, a sulfone-based polymer, a polyether

sulfone-based resin, a polyether ether ketone-based resin polymer, a polyphenylene sulfide-based resin, a vinylidene chloride-based resin, a vinyl butyral-based resin, an allylate-based resin, a polyoxymethylene-based resin, a silicone-based resin, a urethane-based resin and others. These resins can be used either alone or in combination of two kinds or more. There can also be used with a cured product from a thermosetting or an ultraviolet curing resin such as a phenol type, a melamine type, acrylic type, urethane type, epoxy type or a silicone type.

A translucent thermoplastic resin may also be a resin of isotropy hard to generate alignment birefringence caused by a molding stress or the like, or alternatively a resin of anisotropy easy to generate alignment birefringence. A translucent thermoplastic resin preferably has a glass transition temperature of usually 110°C or higher, preferably 115°C or higher and especially preferably 120°C or higher in consideration of heat resistance and formability. A deflection temperature under load thereof is preferably 80°C or higher. A deflection temperature under load thereof is a temperature of a heat transfer medium when a deflection of a test piece reaches 0.32 mm in a case where, according to JIS K7207, a bending stress of 181.4 N/cm² is imposed on the test piece with a height of 10 mm in a heating bath and in this state, a temperature of the heat transfer medium is raised at a rate of 2°C/min.

In materials forming minute domains 3, it is not limited

whether the material has birefringence or isotropy, but materials having birefringence is particularly preferable. Moreover, as materials having birefringence, materials (henceforth, referred to as liquid crystalline material) showing liquid crystallinity at least at the time of orientation treatment may preferably used. That is, the liquid crystalline material may show or may lose liquid crystallinity in the formed minute domain 3, as long as it shows liquid crystallinity at the orientation treatment time.

As materials forming minute domains 3, materials having birefringences (liquid crystalline materials) may be any of materials showing nematic liquid crystallinity, smectic liquid crystallinity, and cholesteric liquid crystallinity, or of materials showing lyotropic liquid crystallinity. Moreover, materials having birefringence may be of liquid crystalline thermoplastic resins, and may be formed by polymerization of liquid crystalline monomers. When the liquid crystalline material is of liquid crystalline thermoplastic resins, in the view point of heat-resistance of structures finally obtained, resins with high glass transition temperatures may be preferable. Furthermore, it is preferable to use materials showing glass state at least at room temperatures. Usually, a liquid crystalline thermoplastic resin is oriented by heating, subsequently cooled to be fixed, and forms minute domains 3 while liquid crystallinity are maintained. Although liquid crystalline monomers after orienting can form minute domains 3 in the state of fixed by polymerization,

cross-linking, etc., some of the formed minute domains 3 may lose liquid crystallinity. As a liquid crystalline material, preferable is a liquid crystalline thermoplastic resin maintaining liquid crystallinity even in minute domains 3.

5 As the above-mentioned liquid crystalline thermoplastic resins, polymers having various skeletons of principal chain types, side chain types, or compounded types thereof may be used without particular limitation. As principal chain type liquid crystal polymers, polymers, such as condensed polymers
10 having structures where mesogen groups including aromatic units etc. are combined, for example, polyester based, polyamide based, polycarbonate based, and polyester imide based polymers, may be mentioned. As the above-mentioned aromatic units used as mesogen groups, phenyl based, biphenyl based, and
15 naphthalene based units may be mentioned, and the aromatic units may have substituents, such as cyano groups, alkyl groups, alkoxy groups, and halogen groups.

As side chain type liquid crystal polymers, polymers having principal chain of, such as polyacrylate based,
20 polymethacrylate based, poly-alpha-halo acrylate based, poly-alpha-halo cyano acrylate based, polyacrylamide based, polysiloxane based, and poly malonate based principal chain as a skeleton, and having mesogen groups including cyclic units etc. in side chains may be mentioned. As the above-mentioned
25 cyclic units used as mesogen groups, biphenyl based, phenyl

benzoate based, phenylcyclohexane based, azoxybenzene based, azomethine based, azobenzene based, phenyl pyrimidine based, diphenyl acetylene based, diphenyl benzoate based, bicyclo hexane based, cyclohexylbenzene based, terphenyl based units, etc. may be mentioned. Terminal groups of these cyclic units may have substituents, such as cyano group, alkyl group, alkenyl group, alkoxy group, halogen group, haloalkyl group, haloalkoxy group, and haloalkenyl group. Groups having halogen groups may be used for phenyl groups of mesogen groups.

Besides, any mesogen groups of the liquid crystal polymer may be bonded via a spacer part giving flexibility. As spacer parts, polymethylene chain, polyoxymethylene chain, etc. may be mentioned. A number of repetitions of structural units forming the spacer parts is suitably determined by chemical structure of mesogen parts, and the number of repeating units of polymethylene chain is from 0 to 20, preferably from 2 to 12, and the number of repeating units of polyoxymethylene chain is from 0 to 10, and preferably from 1 to 3.

The above-mentioned liquid crystalline thermoplastic resins preferably have glass transition temperatures of 50°C or more, and more preferably 80°C or more. Furthermore they have approximately from 2,000 to 100,000 of weight average molecular weight.

As liquid crystalline monomers, monomers having polymerizable functional groups, such as acryloyl groups and

methacryloyl groups, at terminal groups, and further having mesogen groups and spacer parts including the above-mentioned cyclic units etc. may be mentioned. Crossed-linked structures may be introduced using polymerizable functional groups having two or more acryloyl groups, methacryloyl groups, etc., and durability may also be improved.

Materials forming minute domains 3 are not entirely limited to the above-mentioned liquid crystalline materials, and non-liquid crystalline resins may be used if they are different materials from the matrix materials. As the above-mentioned resins, polyvinyl alcohols and derivatives thereof, polyolefins, polyallylates, polymethacrylates, polyacrylamides, polyethylene terephthalates, acrylic styrene copolymes, etc. may be mentioned. Moreover, particles without birefringence may be used as materials for forming the minute domains 3. As fine-particles concerned, resins, such as polyacrylates and acrylic styrene copolymers, may be mentioned. A size of the fine-particles is not especially limited, and particle diameters of from 0.05 to 500 μm may be used, and preferably from 0.5 to 100 μm . Although it is preferable that materials for forming minute domains 3 is of the above-mentioned liquid crystalline materials, non-liquid crystalline materials may be mixed and used to the above-mentioned liquid crystalline materials. Furthermore, as materials for forming minute domains 3, non-liquid crystalline materials may also be independently used.

As an absorption dichroic dye, preferably used is a dye that does not lose a dichroic performance due to decomposition or degeneration even in a case where a liquid crystalline material having heat resistance and birefringence is heated and aligned. An absorption dichroic dye is, as described above, preferably a dye having at least one absorption band with a dichroic ratio of 3 or more in the visible light wavelength region. Examples of such dyes with a high dichroic ratio include: an azo-based dye, a perylene-based dye and an anthraquinone-based dye which are preferably used in a dye-based polarizer. The dyes can be used as a mixed type dye. The dyes are detailed in JP-A No. 54-76171 or the like.

In a case where a color polarizer is produced, there can be used a dye having an absorption wavelength matching a characteristic thereof. In a case where a neutral gray polarizer is produced, two or more kinds of dyes are properly mixed together so as cause absorption across all of the visible light region.

In a polarizer of this invention, while producing a film in which a matrix is formed with a translucent thermoplastic resin 1 including an absorption dichroic dye 2, minute domains 3 (for example, an oriented birefringent material formed with liquid crystalline materials) are dispersed in the matrix concerned. Moreover, the above-mentioned refractive index difference (Δn^1) in a Δn^1 direction and a refractive index difference (Δn^2) in a Δn^2 direction are controlled to be in the above-mentioned range in

the film.

A obtained polarizer is controlled to be a transmittance to a linearly polarized light in a transmission direction is 80% or more, a haze value is 10% or less , and a haze value to a linearly polarized light in an absorption direction is 50% or more. Also preferably the refractive index difference (Δn^1) in Δn^1 direction and the refractive index difference (Δn^2) in Δn^2 direction are controlled to be the above-mentioned ranges in the film.

Manufacturing process of a polarizer of this invention is not especially limited, and for example, the polarizer of this invention may be obtained using following production processes: (1) a process for manufacturing a mixed solution in which a material for forming minute domains is dispersed in a translucent thermoplastic resin forming a matrix (description is, hereinafter, to be provided, with reference to an example of representation, for a case where a liquid crystalline material is used as a material forming the minute domains. A case by a liquid crystalline material will apply to a case by other materials.);

(2) a process in which a film is formed with the mixed solution of the above-mentioned (1);

(3) a process in which the film obtained in the above-mentioned (2) is oriented (stretched); and

(4) a process in which an absorption dichroic dye is dispersed (dyed) in the translucent thermoplastic resin forming the

above-mentioned matrix.

In addition, an order of the processes (1) to (4) may suitably be determined.

In the above-mentioned process (1), a mixed solution is
5 firstly prepared in which a liquid crystalline material forming
minute domains is dispersed in a translucent thermoplastic resin
forming a matrix. A method for preparing the mixed solution
concerned is not especially limited, and a method may be
mentioned of utilizing a phase separation phenomenon between
10 the above-mentioned matrix component (a translucent
thermoplastic resin) and a liquid crystalline material. For
example, a method may be mentioned in which a material having
poor compatibility between the matrix component as a liquid
crystalline material is selected, a solution of the material
15 forming the liquid crystalline material is dispersed using
dispersing agents, such as a surface active agent, in a water
solution of the matrix component. In preparation of the
above-mentioned mixed solution, some of combinations of the
translucent material forming the matrix, and the liquid crystal
20 material forming minute domains do not require a dispersing
agent. An amount used of the liquid crystalline material
dispersed in the matrix is not especially limited, and a liquid
crystalline material is from 0.01 to 100 part(s) by weight to a
translucent thermoplastic resin 100 parts by weight, and
25 preferably it is from 0.1 to 10 part(s) by weight. The liquid

crystalline material is used in a state dissolved or not dissolved in a solvent. Examples of solvents, for example, include: water, toluene, xylene, hexane, cyclohexane, dichloromethane, trichloromethane, dichloroethane, trichloroethane, 5 tetrachloroethane, trichloroethylene, methyl ethyl ketone, methylisobutylketone, cyclohexanone, cyclopentanone, tetrahydrofuran, ethyl acetate, etc. Solvents for the matrix components and solvents for the liquid crystalline materials may be of same, or may be of different solvents.

10 In the above-mentioned process (2), in order to reduce foaming in a drying process after a film formation, it is desirable that solvents for dissolving the liquid crystalline material forming minute domains is not used in preparation of the mixed solution in the process (1). When solvents are not used, for 15 example, a method may be mentioned in which a liquid crystalline material is directly added to an aqueous solution of a translucency material forming a matrix, and then is heated above a liquid crystal temperature range in order to disperse the liquid crystalline material uniformly in a smaller state.

20 In addition, a solution of a matrix component, a solution of a liquid crystalline material, or a mixed solution may include various kinds of additives, such as dispersing agents, surface active agents, ultraviolet absorption agents, flame retardants, antioxidants, plasticizers, mold lubricants, other lubricants, and 25 colorants in a range not disturbing an object of this invention.

In the process (2) for obtaining a film of the above-mentioned mixed solution, the above-mentioned mixed solution is heated and dried to remove solvents, and thus a film with minute domains dispersed in the matrix is produced. As methods for formation of the film, various kinds of methods, such as casting methods, extrusion methods, injection molding methods, roll molding methods, and flow casting molding methods, may be adopted. In film molding, a size of minute domains in the film is controlled to be in a range of 0.05 to 500 μm in a Δn^1 direction. Sizes and dispersibility of the minute domains may be controlled, by adjusting a viscosity of the mixed solution, selection and combination of the solvent of the mixed solution, dispersant, and thermal processes (cooling rate) of the mixed solvent and a rate of drying. For example, a mixed solution of a translucent thermoplastic resin that has a high viscosity and generates high shearing force and that forms a matrix, and a liquid crystalline material forming minute domains is dispersed by agitators, such as a homogeneous mixer, being heated at a temperature in no less than a range of a liquid crystal temperature, and thereby minute domains may be dispersed in a smaller state.

The process (3) giving orientation to the above-mentioned film may be performed by stretching the film. In stretching, uniaxial stretching, biaxial stretching, diagonal stretching are exemplified, but uniaxial stretching is usually performed. Any

of dries type stretching in air may be adopted, and any of wet type stretching in an aqueous system bath may be adopted in case of the translucent thermoplastic resin is water-soluble resin, such as polyvinyl alcohol, as the stretching method. When adopting a wet type stretching, an aqueous system bath may include suitable additives (boron compounds, such as boric acid; iodide of alkali metal, etc.) A stretching ratio is not especially limited, and in usual a ratio of approximately from 2 to 10 times is preferably adopted.

This stretching may orient the absorption dichroic dye in a direction of stretching axis. Moreover, the liquid crystalline material forming a birefringent material is oriented in the stretching direction in minute domains by the above-mentioned stretching, and as a result birefringence is demonstrated.

It is desirable the minute domains may be deformed according to stretching. When minute domains are of non-liquid crystalline materials, approximate temperatures of glass transition temperatures of the resins are desirably selected as stretching temperatures, and when the minute domains are of liquid crystalline materials, temperatures making the liquid crystalline materials exist in a liquid crystal state such as nematic phase or smectic phase or an isotropic phase state, are desirably selected as stretching temperatures. When inadequate orientation is given by stretching process, processes, such as heating orientation treatment, may separately be added.

In addition to the above-mentioned stretching, function of external fields, such as electric field and magnetic field, may be used for orientation of the liquid crystalline material. Moreover, liquid crystalline materials mixed with light reactive substances, such as azobenzene, and liquid crystalline materials having light reactive groups, such as a cinnamoyl group, introduced thereto are used, and thereby these materials may be oriented by orientation processing with light irradiation etc. Furthermore, a stretching processing and the above-mentioned orientation processing may also be used in combination. When the liquid crystalline material is of liquid crystalline thermoplastic resins, it is oriented at the time of stretching, cooled at room temperatures, and thereby orientation is fixed and stabilized. Since target optical property will be demonstrated if orientation is carried out, the liquid crystalline monomer may not necessarily be in a cured state. However, in liquid crystalline monomers having low isotropic transition temperatures, a few temperature rise provides an isotropic state. In such a case, since anisotropic scattering may not be demonstrated but conversely polarized light performance deteriorates, the liquid crystalline monomers are preferably cured. Besides, many of liquid crystalline monomers will be crystallized when left at room temperatures, and then they will demonstrate anisotropic scattering and polarized light performance conversely deteriorate, the liquid crystalline monomers are preferably cured. In the

view point of these phenomena, in order to make orientation state stably exist under any kind of conditions, liquid crystalline monomers are preferably cured. In curing of a liquid crystalline monomer, for example, after the liquid crystalline monomer is mixed with photopolymerization initiators, dispersed in a solution of a matrix component and oriented, in either of timing (before dyed or after dyed by absorption dichroic dyes), the liquid crystalline monomer is cured by exposure with ultraviolet radiation etc. to stabilize orientation. Desirably, the liquid crystalline monomer is cured before dyed with absorption dichroic dyes.

As a process (4) in which the absorption dichroic dye is dispersed in the translucent thermoplastic resin used for forming the above-mentioned matrix, in general, a method in which the above-mentioned film is immersed into a bath of aqueous system dissolving the absorption dichroic dye may be mentioned. Timing of immersing may be before or after the above-mentioned stretching process (3).

Moreover, a percentage of the absorption dichroic dye in the polarizer obtained is not especially limited, but a percentage of the absorption dichroic dye is preferably controlled to be from 0.01 to 100 part(s) by weight grade, more preferably from 0.05 to 50 parts(s) by weight to the translucent thermoplastic resin 100 parts by weight.

In addition, although the absorption dichroic dye used for

dyeing, boric acid used for cross-linking are permeated into a film by immersing the film in an aqueous solution as mentioned above, instead of this method, a method may be adopted that arbitrary types and amounts may be added before film formation of the process (2) and before or after preparation of a mixed solution in the process (1). And both methods may be used in combination. However, when high temperatures (for example, no less than 80°C) is required in the process (3) at the time of stretching etc., in the view point of heat resistance of the absorption dichroic dye, the process (4) for dispersing and dyeing the absorption dichroic dye may be desirably performed after the process (3).

Mixing of the absorption dichroic dye and the translucent thermoplastic resin prior to film formation is, for example, performed according to an ordinary method. For example, mixing of the absorption dichroic dye and the translucent thermoplastic resin is performed by dissolving these components into solvents of the same kind. Usually, as a solvent used in this case, properly selected is a solvent into which the dichroic dye and the translucent thermoplastic can be dissolved. Examples of solvents used for mixing of the absorption dichroic dye and the translucent thermoplastic resin include: water, toluene, xylene, hexane, cyclohexane, dichloromethane, trichloromethane, dichloroethane, trichloroethane, tetrachloroethane, trichloroethylene, methylethylketone, methylisobutylketone, cyclohexanone,

cyclopentanone, tetrahydrofuran, ethyl acetate and others. Note that in a case where a water-soluble resin such as polyvinyl alcohol is adopted for a translucent thermoplastic resin, water is preferably used as a solvent. A concentration of solution obtained by dissolving the absorption dichroic dye and a translucent thermoplastic resin in a solvent is usually preferably adjusted to the order in the range of 1 to 50 wt %.

Note that in a case where the absorption dichroic dye and the translucent thermoplastic resin are mixed in advance, a film prior to stretching is dyed, used as an absorption dichroic dye is an absorption dichroic dye that does not decompose and degraded at a heating temperature in stretching.

In production of the polarizer, processes for various purposes (5) may be given other than the above-mentioned processes (1) to (4). As a process (5), for example, a process in which a film is immersed in water bath and swollen may be mentioned for the purpose of mainly improving iodine dyeing efficiency of the film. Besides, a process in which a film is immersed in a water bath including arbitrary additives dissolved therein may be mentioned. A process in which a film is immersed in an aqueous solution including additives, such as boric acid and borax, for the purpose of cross-linking a thermoplastic resin (matrix) may be mentioned.

As for the process (3) of orienting (stretching) of the above-mentioned film, the process (4) of dispersing and dyeing

the absorption dichroic dye to a matrix resin and the above-mentioned process (5), so long as each of the processes (3) and (4) is provided at least 1 time, respectively, a number, order and conditions (a bath temperature, immersion period of time, etc.) of the processes, may arbitrarily be selected, each process may separately be performed and furthermore a plurality of processes may simultaneously be performed. For example, a cross-linking process of the process (5) and the stretching process (3) may be carried out simultaneously.

A film given the above treatments is desirably dried using suitable conditions. Drying is performed according to conventional methods.

A thickness of the obtained polarizer (film) is not especially limited, in general, but it is from 1 μm to 3 mm, preferably from 5 μm to 1 mm, and more preferably from 10 to 500 μm .

A polarizer obtained in this way does not especially have a relationship in size between a refractive index of the birefringent material forming minute domains and a refractive index of the matrix resin in a stretching direction, whose stretching direction is in a Δn^1 direction and two directions perpendicular to a stretching axis are Δn^2 directions. Moreover, the stretching direction of an absorption dichroic dye is in a direction demonstrating maximal absorption, and thus a polarizer having a maximally demonstrated effect of absorption and scattering may

be realized.

Since a polarizer obtained by this invention has equivalent functions as in existing absorbed type polarizing plates, it may be used in various applicable fields where absorbed type polarizing plates are used without any change.

The above-described polarizer may be used as a polarizing plate with a transparent protective layer prepared at least on one side thereof using a usual method. The transparent protective layer may be prepared as an application layer by polymers, or a laminated layer of films. Proper transparent materials may be used as a transparent polymer or a film material that forms the transparent protective layer, and the material having outstanding transparency, mechanical strength, heat stability and outstanding moisture interception property, etc. may be preferably used. As materials of the above-mentioned protective layer, for example, polyester type polymers, such as polyethylene terephthalate and polyethylenenaphthalate; cellulose type polymers, such as diacetyl cellulose and triacetyl cellulose; acrylics type polymer, such as poly methylmethacrylate; styrene type polymers, such as polystyrene and acrylonitrile-styrene copolymer (AS resin); polycarbonate type polymer may be mentioned. Besides, as examples of the polymer forming a protective film, polyolefin type polymers, such as polyethylene, polypropylene, polyolefin that has cyclo- type or norbornene structure, ethylene-propylene copolymer; vinyl chloride type polymer; amide type polymers,

such as nylon and aromatic polyamide; imide type polymers; sulfone type polymers; polyether sulfone type polymers; polyether-ether ketone type polymers; poly phenylene sulfide type polymers; vinyl alcohol type polymer; vinylidene chloride type polymers; vinyl butyral type polymers; allylate type polymers; polyoxymethylene type polymers; epoxy type polymers; or blend polymers of the above-mentioned polymers may be mentioned. Films made of heat curing type or ultraviolet ray curing type resins, such as acryl based, urethane based, acryl urethane based, epoxy based, and silicone based, etc. may be mentioned.

Moreover, as is described in Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. 2001-343529 (WO 01/37007), polymer films, for example, resin compositions including (A) thermoplastic resins having substituted and/or non-substituted imido group is in side chain, and (B) thermoplastic resins having substituted and/or non-substituted phenyl and nitrile group in sidechain may be mentioned. As an illustrative example, a film may be mentioned that is made of a resin composition including alternating copolymer comprising iso-butylene and N-methyl maleimide, and acrylnitrile-styrene copolymer. A film comprising mixture extruded article of resin compositions etc. may be used.

As a transparent protective film, if polarization property and durability are taken into consideration, cellulose based polymer, such as triacetyl cellulose, is preferable, and especially triacetyl

cellulose film is suitable. In general, a thickness of a transparent protective film is 500 μm or less, preferably from 1 to 300 μm , and especially preferably from 5 to 300 μm . In addition, when transparent protective films are provided on both sides of the polarizer, transparent protective films comprising same polymer material may be used on both of a front side and a back side, and transparent protective films comprising different polymer materials etc. may be used.

Moreover, it is preferable that the transparent protective film may have as little coloring as possible. Accordingly, a protective film having a phase difference value in a film thickness direction represented by $R_{th} = [(n_x + n_y) / 2 - n_z] \times d$ of from -90 nm to +75 nm (where, n_x and n_y represent principal indices of refraction in a film plane, n_z represents refractive index in a film thickness direction, and d represents a film thickness) may be preferably used. Thus, coloring (optical coloring) of polarizing plate resulting from a protective film may mostly be cancelled using a protective film having a phase difference value (R_{th}) of from -90 nm to +75 nm in a thickness direction. The phase difference value (R_{th}) in a thickness direction is preferably from -80 nm to +60 nm, and especially preferably from -70 nm to +45 nm.

A hard coat layer may be prepared, or antireflection processing, processing aiming at sticking prevention, diffusion or anti glare may be performed onto the face on which the polarizing

film of the above described transparent protective film has not been adhered.

A hard coat processing is applied for the purpose of protecting the surface of the polarizing plate from damage, and this hard coat film may be formed by a method in which, for example, a curable coated film with excellent hardness, slide property etc. is added on the surface of the protective film using suitable ultraviolet curable type resins, such as acrylic type and silicone type resins. Antireflection processing is applied for the purpose of antireflection of outdoor daylight on the surface of a polarizing plate and it may be prepared by forming an antireflection film according to the conventional method etc. Besides, a sticking prevention processing is applied for the purpose of adherence prevention with adjoining layer.

In addition, an anti glare processing is applied in order to prevent a disadvantage that outdoor daylight reflects on the surface of a polarizing plate to disturb visual recognition of transmitting light through the polarizing plate, and the processing may be applied, for example, by giving a fine concavo-convex structure to a surface of the protective film using, for example, a suitable method, such as rough surfacing treatment method by sandblasting or embossing and a method of combining transparent fine particle. As a fine particle combined in order to form a fine concavo-convex structure on the above-mentioned surface, transparent fine particles whose

average particle size is from 0.5 to 50 μm , for example, such as inorganic type fine particles that may have conductivity comprising silica, alumina, titania, zirconia, tin oxides, indium oxides, cadmium oxides, antimony oxides, etc., and organic type fine particles comprising cross-linked or non-cross-linked polymers may be used. When forming fine concavo-convex structure on the surface, the amount of fine particle used is usually about from 2 to 50 weight part to the transparent resin 100 weight part that forms the fine concavo-convex structure on the surface, and preferably from 5 to 25 weight part. An anti glare layer may serve as a diffusion layer (viewing angle expanding function etc.) for diffusing transmitting light through the polarizing plate and expanding a viewing angle etc.

In addition, the above-mentioned antireflection layer, sticking prevention layer, diffusion layer, anti glare layer, etc. may be built in the protective film itself, and also they may be prepared as an optical layer different from the protective layer.

Adhesives are used for adhesion processing of the above described polarizing film and the transparent protective film. As adhesives, isocyanate derived adhesives, polyvinyl alcohol derived adhesives, gelatin derived adhesives, vinyl polymers derived latex type, aqueous polyesters derived adhesives, etc. may be mentioned. The above-described adhesives are usually used as adhesives comprising aqueous solution, and usually contain solid of from 0.5 to 60 % by weight.

A polarizing plate of the present invention is manufactured by adhering the above described transparent protective film and the polarizing film using the above described adhesives. The application of adhesives may be performed to any of the transparent protective film or the polarizing film, and may be performed to both of them. After adhered, drying process is given and the adhesion layer comprising applied dry layer is formed. Adhering process of the polarizing film and the transparent protective film may be performed using a roll laminator etc. Although a thickness of the adhesion layer is not especially limited, it is usually approximately from 0.1 to 5 μm .

A polarizing plate of the present invention may be used in practical use as an optical film laminated with other optical layers. Although there is especially no limitation about the optical layers, one layer or two layers or more of optical layers, which may be used for formation of a liquid crystal display etc., such as a reflector, a transreflector, a retardation plate (a half wavelength plate and a quarter wavelength plate included), and a viewing angle compensation film, may be used. Especially preferable polarizing plates are; a reflection type polarizing plate or a transreflective type polarizing plate in which a reflector or a transreflective reflector is further laminated onto a polarizing plate of the present invention; an elliptically polarizing plate or a circular polarizing plate in which a retardation plate is further laminated onto the polarizing plate; a wide viewing angle polarizing plate in which a

viewing angle compensation film is further laminated onto the polarizing plate; or a polarizing plate in which a brightness enhancement film is further laminated onto the polarizing plate.

A reflective layer is prepared on a polarizing plate to give a reflection type polarizing plate, and this type of plate is used for a liquid crystal display in which an incident light from a view side (display side) is reflected to give a display. This type of plate does not require built-in light sources, such as a backlight, but has an advantage that a liquid crystal display may easily be made thinner. A reflection type polarizing plate may be formed using suitable methods, such as a method in which a reflective layer of metal etc. is, if required, attached to one side of a polarizing plate through a transparent protective layer etc.

As an example of a reflection type polarizing plate, a plate may be mentioned on which, if required, a reflective layer is formed using a method of attaching a foil and vapor deposition film of reflective metals, such as aluminum, to one side of a matte treated protective film. Moreover, a different type of plate with a fine concavo-convex structure on the surface obtained by mixing fine particle into the above-mentioned protective film, on which a reflective layer of concavo-convex structure is prepared, may be mentioned. The reflective layer that has the above-mentioned fine concavo-convex structure diffuses incident light by random reflection to prevent directivity and glaring appearance, and has an advantage of

controlling unevenness of light and darkness etc. Moreover, the protective film containing the fine particle has an advantage that unevenness of light and darkness may be controlled more effectively, as a result that an incident light and its reflected light that is transmitted through the film are diffused. A reflective layer with fine concavo-convex structure on the surface effected by a surface fine concavo-convex structure of a protective film may be formed by a method of attaching a metal to the surface of a transparent protective layer directly using, for example, suitable methods of a vacuum evaporation method, such as a vacuum deposition method, an ion plating method, and a sputtering method, and a plating method etc.

Instead of a method in which a reflection plate is directly given to the protective film of the above-mentioned polarizing plate, a reflection plate may also be used as a reflective sheet constituted by preparing a reflective layer on the suitable film for the transparent film. In addition, since a reflective layer is usually made of metal, it is desirable that the reflective side is covered with a protective film or a polarizing plate etc. when used, from a viewpoint of preventing deterioration in reflectance by oxidation, of maintaining an initial reflectance for a long period of time and of avoiding preparation of a protective layer separately etc.

In addition, a transreflective type polarizing plate may be obtained by preparing the above-mentioned reflective layer as a

transreflective type reflective layer, such as a half-mirror etc. that reflects and transmits light. A transreflective type polarizing plate is usually prepared in the backside of a liquid crystal cell and it may form a liquid crystal display unit of a type in which a picture is displayed by an incident light reflected from a view side (display side) when used in a comparatively well-lighted atmosphere. And this unit displays a picture, in a comparatively dark atmosphere, using embedded type light sources, such as a back light built in backside of a transreflective type polarizing plate. That is, the transreflective type polarizing plate is useful to obtain of a liquid crystal display of the type that saves energy of light sources, such as a back light, in a well-lighted atmosphere, and can be used with a built-in light source if needed in a comparatively dark atmosphere etc.

The above-mentioned polarizing plate may be used as elliptically polarizing plate or circularly polarizing plate on which the retardation plate is laminated. A description of the above-mentioned elliptically polarizing plate or circularly polarizing plate will be made in the following paragraph. These polarizing plates change linearly polarized light into elliptically polarized light or circularly polarized light, elliptically polarized light or circularly polarized light into linearly polarized light or change the polarization direction of linearly polarization by a function of the retardation plate. As a retardation plate that changes circularly polarized light into linearly polarized light or

linearly polarized light into circularly polarized light, what is called a quarter wavelength plate (also called $\lambda/4$ plate) is used. Usually, half-wavelength plate (also called $\lambda/2$ plate) is used, when changing the polarization direction of linearly polarized light.

Elliptically polarizing plate is effectively used to give a monochrome display without above-mentioned coloring by compensating (preventing) coloring (blue or yellow color) produced by birefringence of a liquid crystal layer of a super twisted nematic (STN) type liquid crystal display. Furthermore, a polarizing plate in which three-dimensional refractive index is controlled may also preferably compensate (prevent) coloring produced when a screen of a liquid crystal display is viewed from an oblique direction. Circularly polarizing plate is effectively used, for example, when adjusting a color tone of a picture of a reflection type liquid crystal display that provides a colored picture, and it also has function of antireflection. For example, a retardation plate may be used that compensates coloring and viewing angle, etc. caused by birefringence of various wavelength plates or liquid crystal layers etc. Besides, optical characteristics, such as retardation, may be controlled using laminated layer with two or more sorts of retardation plates having suitable retardation value according to each purpose. As retardation plates, birefringence films formed by stretching films comprising suitable polymers, such as polycarbonates,

norbornene type resins, polyvinyl alcohols, polystyrenes, poly methyl methacrylates, polypropylene; polyallylates and polyamides; oriented films comprising liquid crystal materials, such as liquid crystal polymer; and films on which an alignment layer of a liquid crystal material is supported may be mentioned.

A retardation plate may be a retardation plate that has a proper phase difference according to the purposes of use, such as various kinds of wavelength plates and plates aiming at compensation of coloring by birefringence of a liquid crystal layer and of visual angle, etc., and may be a retardation plate in which two or more sorts of retardation plates is laminated so that optical properties, such as retardation, may be controlled.

The above-mentioned elliptically polarizing plate and an above-mentioned reflected type elliptically polarizing plate are laminated plate combining suitably a polarizing plate or a reflection type polarizing plate with a retardation plate. This type of elliptically polarizing plate etc. may be manufactured by combining a polarizing plate (reflected type) and a retardation plate, and by laminating them one by one separately in the manufacture process of a liquid crystal display. On the other hand, the polarizing plate in which lamination was beforehand carried out and was obtained as an optical film, such as an elliptically polarizing plate, is excellent in a stable quality, a workability in lamination etc., and has an advantage in improved manufacturing efficiency of a liquid crystal display.

A viewing angle compensation film is a film for extending viewing angle so that a picture may look comparatively clearly, even when it is viewed from an oblique direction not from vertical direction to a screen. As such a viewing angle compensation retardation plate, in addition, a film having birefringence property that is processed by uniaxial stretching or orthogonal bidirectional stretching and a biaxial stretched film as inclined orientation film etc. may be used. As inclined orientation film, for example, a film obtained using a method in which a heat shrinking film is adhered to a polymer film, and then the combined film is heated and stretched or shrunk under a condition of being influenced by a shrinking force, or a film that is oriented in oblique direction may be mentioned. The viewing angle compensation film is suitably combined for the purpose of prevention of coloring caused by change of visible angle based on retardation by liquid crystal cell etc. and of expansion of viewing angle with good visibility.

Besides, a compensation plate in which an optical anisotropy layer consisting of an alignment layer of liquid crystal polymer, especially consisting of an inclined alignment layer of discotic liquid crystal polymer is supported with triacetyl cellulose film may preferably be used from a viewpoint of attaining a wide viewing angle with good visibility.

The polarizing plate with which a polarizing plate and a brightness enhancement film are adhered together is usually

used being prepared in a backside of a liquid crystal cell. A brightness enhancement film shows a characteristic that reflects linearly polarized light with a predetermined polarization axis, or circularly polarized light with a predetermined direction, and that transmits other light, when natural light by back lights of a liquid crystal display or by reflection from a back-side etc., comes in. The polarizing plate, which is obtained by laminating a brightness enhancement film to a polarizing plate, thus does not transmit light without the predetermined polarization state and reflects it, while obtaining transmitted light with the predetermined polarization state by accepting a light from light sources, such as a backlight. This polarizing plate makes the light reflected by the brightness enhancement film further reversed through the reflective layer prepared in the backside and forces the light re-enter into the brightness enhancement film, and increases the quantity of the transmitted light through the brightness enhancement film by transmitting a part or all of the light as light with the predetermined polarization state. The polarizing plate simultaneously supplies polarized light that is difficult to be absorbed in a polarizer, and increases the quantity of the light usable for a liquid crystal picture display etc., and as a result luminosity may be improved. That is, in the case where the light enters through a polarizer from backside of a liquid crystal cell by the back light etc. without using a brightness enhancement film, most of the light, with a polarization

direction different from the polarization axis of a polarizer, is absorbed by the polarizer, and does not transmit through the polarizer. This means that although influenced with the characteristics of the polarizer used, about 50 percent of light is absorbed by the polarizer, the quantity of the light usable for a liquid crystal picture display etc. decreases so much, and a resulting picture displayed becomes dark. A brightness enhancement film does not enter the light with the polarizing direction absorbed by the polarizer into the polarizer but reflects the light once by the brightness enhancement film, and further makes the light reversed through the reflective layer etc. prepared in the backside to re-enter the light into the brightness enhancement film. By this above-mentioned repeated operation, only when the polarization direction of the light reflected and reversed between the both becomes to have the polarization direction which may pass a polarizer, the brightness enhancement film transmits the light to supply it to the polarizer. As a result, the light from a backlight may be efficiently used for the display of the picture of a liquid crystal display to obtain a bright screen.

A diffusion plate may also be prepared between brightness enhancement film and the above described reflective layer, etc. A polarized light reflected by the brightness enhancement film goes to the above described reflective layer etc., and the diffusion plate installed diffuses passing light uniformly and changes the light

state into depolarization at the same time. That is, the diffusion plate returns polarized light to natural light state. Steps are repeated where light, in the unpolarized state, i.e., natural light state, reflects through reflective layer and the like, and again goes into brightness enhancement film through diffusion plate toward reflective layer and the like. Diffusion plate that returns polarized light to the natural light state is installed between brightness enhancement film and the above described reflective layer, and the like, in this way, and thus a uniform and bright screen may be provided while maintaining brightness of display screen, and simultaneously controlling unevenness of brightness of the display screen. By preparing such diffusion plate, it is considered that number of repetition times of reflection of a first incident light increases with sufficient degree to provide uniform and bright display screen conjointly with diffusion function of the diffusion plate.

The suitable films are used as the above-mentioned brightness enhancement film. Namely, multilayer thin film of a dielectric substance; a laminated film that has the characteristics of transmitting a linearly polarized light with a predetermined polarizing axis, and of reflecting other light, such as the multilayer laminated film of the thin film having a different refractive-index anisotropy; an aligned film of cholesteric liquid-crystal polymer; a film that has the characteristics of reflecting a circularly polarized light with

either left-handed or right-handed rotation and transmitting other light, such as a film on which the aligned cholesteric liquid crystal layer is supported; etc. may be mentioned.

Therefore, in the brightness enhancement film of a type that transmits a linearly polarized light having the above-mentioned predetermined polarization axis, by arranging the polarization axis of the transmitted light and entering the light into a polarizing plate as it is, the absorption loss by the polarizing plate is controlled and the polarized light can be transmitted efficiently. On the other hand, in the brightness enhancement film of a type that transmits a circularly polarized light as a cholesteric liquid-crystal layer, the light may be entered into a polarizer as it is, but it is desirable to enter the light into a polarizer after changing the circularly polarized light to a linearly polarized light through a retardation plate, taking control an absorption loss into consideration. In addition, a circularly polarized light is convertible into a linearly polarized light using a quarter wavelength plate as the retardation plate.

A retardation plate that works as a quarter wavelength plate in a wide wavelength ranges, such as a visible-light band, is obtained by a method in which a retardation layer working as a quarter wavelength plate to a pale color light with a wavelength of 550 nm is laminated with a retardation layer having other retardation characteristics, such as a retardation layer working as a half-wavelength plate. Therefore, the retardation plate

located between a polarizing plate and a brightness enhancement film may consist of one or more retardation layers.

In addition, also in a cholesteric liquid-crystal layer, a layer reflecting a circularly polarized light in a wide wavelength ranges, such as a visible-light band, may be obtained by adopting a configuration structure in which two or more layers with different reflective wavelength are laminated together. Thus a transmitted circularly polarized light in a wide wavelength range may be obtained using this type of cholesteric liquid-crystal layer.

Moreover, the polarizing plate may consist of multi-layered film of laminated layers of a polarizing plate and two of more of optical layers as the above-mentioned separated type polarizing plate. Therefore, a polarizing plate may be a reflection type elliptically polarizing plate or a semi-transmission type elliptically polarizing plate, etc. in which the above-mentioned reflection type polarizing plate or a transreflective type polarizing plate is combined with above described retardation plate respectively.

Although an optical film with the above described optical layer laminated to the polarizing plate may be formed by a method in which laminating is separately carried out sequentially in manufacturing process of a liquid crystal display etc., an optical film in a form of being laminated beforehand has an outstanding advantage that it has excellent stability in quality and assembly

workability, etc., and thus manufacturing processes ability of a liquid crystal display etc. may be raised. Proper adhesion means, such as an adhesive layer, may be used for laminating. On the occasion of adhesion of the above described polarizing plate and other optical films, the optical axis may be set as a suitable configuration angle according to the target retardation characteristics etc.

In the polarizing plate mentioned above and the optical film in which at least one layer of the polarizing plate is laminated, an adhesive layer may also be prepared for adhesion with other members, such as a liquid crystal cell etc. As pressure sensitive adhesive that forms adhesive layer is not especially limited, and, for example, acrylic type polymers; silicone type polymers; polyesters, polyurethanes, polyamides, polyethers; fluorine type and rubber type polymers may be suitably selected as a base polymer. Especially, a pressure sensitive adhesive such as acrylics type pressure sensitive adhesives may be preferably used, which is excellent in optical transparency, showing adhesion characteristics with moderate wettability, cohesiveness and adhesive property and has outstanding weather resistance, heat resistance, etc.

Moreover, an adhesive layer with low moisture absorption and excellent heat resistance is desirable. This is because those characteristics are required in order to prevent foaming and peeling-off phenomena by moisture absorption, in order to

prevent decrease in optical characteristics and curvature of a liquid crystal cell caused by thermal expansion difference etc. and in order to manufacture a liquid crystal display excellent in durability with high quality.

5 The adhesive layer may contain additives, for example, such as natural or synthetic resins, adhesive resins, glass fibers, glass beads, metal powder, fillers comprising other inorganic powder etc., pigments, colorants and antioxidants. Moreover, it may be an adhesive layer that contains fine particle and shows
10 optical diffusion nature.

 Proper method may be carried out to attach an adhesive layer to one side or both sides of the optical film. As an example, about from 10 to 40 weight % of the pressure sensitive adhesive solution in which a base polymer or its composition is
15 dissolved or dispersed, for example, toluene or ethyl acetate or a mixed solvent of these two solvents is prepared. A method in which this solution is directly applied on a polarizing plate top or an optical film top using suitable developing methods, such as flow method and coating method, or a method in which an
20 adhesive layer is once formed on a separator, as mentioned above, and is then transferred on a polarizing plate or an optical film may be mentioned.

 An adhesive layer may also be prepared on one side or both sides of a polarizing plate or an optical film as a layer in
25 which pressure sensitive adhesives with different composition or

different kind etc. are laminated together. Moreover, when adhesive layers are prepared on both sides, adhesive layers that have different compositions, different kinds or thickness, etc. may also be used on front side and backside of a polarizing plate or an optical film. Thickness of an adhesive layer may be suitably determined depending on a purpose of usage or adhesive strength, etc., and generally is from 1 to 500 μm , preferably from 5 to 200 μm , and more preferably from 10 to 100 μm .

A temporary separator is attached to an exposed side of an adhesive layer to prevent contamination etc., until it is practically used. Thereby, it can be prevented that foreign matter contacts adhesive layer in usual handling. As a separator, without taking the above-mentioned thickness conditions into consideration, for example, suitable conventional sheet materials that is coated, if necessary, with release agents, such as silicone type, long chain alkyl type, fluorine type release agents, and molybdenum sulfide may be used. As a suitable sheet material, plastics films, rubber sheets, papers, cloths, no woven fabrics, nets, foamed sheets and metallic foils or laminated sheets thereof may be used.

In addition, in the present invention, ultraviolet absorbing property may be given to the above-mentioned each layer, such as a polarizer for a polarizing plate, a transparent protective film and an optical film etc. and an adhesive layer, using a method of adding UV absorbents, such as salicylic acid ester type

compounds, benzophenol type compounds, benzotriazol type compounds, cyano acrylate type compounds, and nickel complex salt type compounds.

An optical film of the present invention may be preferably used for manufacturing various equipment, such as liquid crystal display, etc. Assembling of a liquid crystal display may be carried out according to conventional methods. That is, a liquid crystal display is generally manufactured by suitably assembling several parts such as a liquid crystal cell, optical films and, if necessity, lighting system, and by incorporating driving circuit. In the present invention, except that an optical film by the present invention is used, there is especially no limitation to use any conventional methods. Also any liquid crystal cell of arbitrary type, such as TN type, and STN type, π type may be used.

Suitable liquid crystal displays, such as liquid crystal display with which the above-mentioned optical film has been located at one side or both sides of the liquid crystal cell, and with which a backlight or a reflector is used for a lighting system may be manufactured. In this case, the optical film by the present invention may be installed in one side or both sides of the liquid crystal cell. When installing the optical films in both sides, they may be of the same type or of different type. Furthermore, in assembling a liquid crystal display, suitable parts, such as diffusion plate, anti-glare layer, antireflection film,

protective plate, prism array, lens array sheet, optical diffusion plate, and backlight, may be installed in suitable position in one layer or two or more layers.

Subsequently, organic electro luminescence equipment (organic EL display) will be explained. Generally, in organic EL display, a transparent electrode, an organic luminescence layer and a metal electrode are laminated on a transparent substrate in an order configuring an illuminant (organic electro luminescence illuminant). Here, an organic luminescence layer is a laminated material of various organic thin films, and much compositions with various combination are known, for example, a laminated material of hole injection layer comprising triphenylamine derivatives etc., a luminescence layer comprising fluorescent organic solids, such as anthracene; a laminated material of electronic injection layer comprising such a luminescence layer and perylene derivatives, etc.; laminated material of these hole injection layers, luminescence layer, and electronic injection layer etc.

An organic EL display emits light based on a principle that positive hole and electron are injected into an organic luminescence layer by impressing voltage between a transparent electrode and a metal electrode, the energy produced by recombination of these positive holes and electrons excites fluorescent substance, and subsequently light is emitted when excited fluorescent substance returns to ground state. A

mechanism called recombination which takes place in a intermediate process is the same as a mechanism in common diodes, and, as is expected, there is a strong non-linear relationship between electric current and luminescence strength accompanied by rectification nature to applied voltage.

In an organic EL display, in order to take out luminescence in an organic luminescence layer, at least one electrode must be transparent. The transparent electrode usually formed with transparent electric conductor, such as indium tin oxide (ITO), is used as an anode. On the other hand, in order to make electronic injection easier and to increase luminescence efficiency, it is important that a substance with small work function is used for cathode, and metal electrodes, such as Mg-Ag and Al-Li, are usually used.

In organic EL display of such a configuration, an organic luminescence layer is formed by a very thin film about 10nm in thickness. For this reason, light is transmitted nearly completely through organic luminescence layer as through transparent electrode. Consequently, since the light that enters, when light is not emitted, as incident light from a surface of a transparent substrate and is transmitted through a transparent electrode and an organic luminescence layer and then is reflected by a metal electrode, appears in front surface side of the transparent substrate again, a display side of the organic EL display looks like mirror if viewed from outside.

In an organic EL display containing an organic electro luminescence illuminant equipped with a transparent electrode on a surface side of an organic luminescence layer that emits light by impression of voltage, and at the same time equipped with a metal electrode on a back side of organic luminescence layer, a retardation plate may be installed between these transparent electrodes and a polarizing plate, while preparing the polarizing plate on the surface side of the transparent electrode.

Since the retardation plate and the polarizing plate have function polarizing the light that has entered as incident light from outside and has been reflected by the metal electrode, they have an effect of making the mirror surface of metal electrode not visible from outside by the polarization action. If a retardation plate is configured with a quarter wavelength plate and the angle between the two polarization directions of the polarizing plate and the retardation plate is adjusted to $\pi/4$, the mirror surface of the metal electrode may be completely covered.

This means that only linearly polarized light component of the external light that enters as incident light into this organic EL display is transmitted with the work of polarizing plate. This linearly polarized light generally gives an elliptically polarized light by the retardation plate, and especially the retardation plate is a quarter wavelength plate, and moreover when the angle between the two polarization directions of the polarizing plate and the retardation plate is adjusted to $\pi/4$, it gives a circularly

polarized light.

This circularly polarized light is transmitted through the transparent substrate, the transparent electrode and the organic thin film, and is reflected by the metal electrode, and then is transmitted through the organic thin film, the transparent electrode and the transparent substrate again, and is turned into a linearly polarized light again with the retardation plate. And since this linearly polarized light lies at right angles to the polarization direction of the polarizing plate, it cannot be transmitted through the polarizing plate. As the result, mirror surface of the metal electrode may be completely covered.

Examples

Description will be given of the invention in a concrete manner stating examples thereof below. Note that, in the following description, part or parts mean part by weight or parts by weight.

Example 1

An aqueous solution of polyvinyl alcohol resin with a polymerization degree of 2400 and a saponification degree of 98.5 % dissolved in water at a solid matter concentration of 13 wt %, a liquid crystalline monomer having a mesogen group to both ends of which respective two acryloyl groups are bonded (having a nematic liquid crystal temperature in the range of from 40 to 70°C)

and glycerin are mixed so as to include polyvinyl alcohol, a liquid crystalline monomer and glycerin at a mixing ratio of 100 : 3 : 15 in weight, and the mixture was heated at a temperature in the liquid crystal temperature range or higher and in the state, stirred with a homo-mixer to obtain a mixed solution. After air bubbles present in the mixed solution were removed by leaving the solution as it is at room temperature (23°C), thereafter the mixed solution was coated with a casting method and the wet coat was dried to then obtain a cloudy mixed film having a thickness of 70 μm . The mixed film was heat-treated at 130°C for 10 min.

After the mixed film was immersed into a water bath at 30°C and caused to be swollen, the film was stretched about 3 times in a dyeing bath of a aqueous solution of a dichroic dye (trade name Congo Red, manufactured by KISHIDA CHEMICAL Co., Ltd.) sold on the market with a concentration of 1 wt % at 30°C. Thereafter, the stretched film was further stretched in a crosslinking bath with 3 wt % boric acid aqueous solution at 50°C so that a total stretch ratio of 6. The secondly stretched film was crosslinked in 4 wt % boric acid aqueous solution at 30°C. Subsequent thereto, the film was dried at 50°C for 4 min to thereby obtain a polarizer of the invention.

(Confirmation of Anisotropic Scattering Expression and Measurement of Refractive Index)

The obtained polarizer was observed under a polarization

microscope, thereby enabling formation of innumerable minute domains of the liquid crystalline monomer dispersed in a matrix of polyvinyl alcohol to be confirmed. The liquid crystalline monomer is aligned along a stretch direction and an average length of the minute domains in a stretch direction (Δn^2 direction) was 1 to 2 μm .

Refractive indexes of the matrix and of the minute domains were separately measured respectively. Measurement was performed at 20°C. First, an independent refractive index of the polyvinyl alcohol film stretched by a same stretching condition was measured using an Abbe refractometer (measurement light: 589nm) to obtain a refractive index = 1.54 in the stretching direction (Δn^1 direction), and a refractive index of Δn^2 direction = 1.52. Moreover, the liquid crystalline monomer was measured for refractive indexes (n_e : extraordinary refractive index, and n_o : ordinary refractive index). The liquid crystalline monomer oriented and coated on a high refractive index glass to which perpendicular orientation processing was given was measured for n_o using an Abbe refractometer (measurement light: 589nm). On the other hand, the liquid crystalline monomer was introduced into a liquid crystal cell to which horizontal orientation processing was given, a retardation ($\Delta n \times d$) was measured using an automatic birefringence measuring apparatus (manufactured by Oji Scientific Instruments, automatic birefringence meter KOBRA 21 ADH), a cell gap (d) was separately

measured using an optical interference method, and then Δn was calculated from the retardation / cell gap. This sum of Δn and n_o was defined as n_e . A value n_e (equivalent to a refractive index in a Δn^1 direction) = 1.64 and n_o (equivalent to a refractive index in a Δn^2 direction) = 1.52 were obtained. Therefore, calculated results of $\Delta n^1 = 1.64 - 1.54 = 0.10$, $\Delta n^2 = 1.52 - 1.52 = 0.00$ were obtained.

Example 2

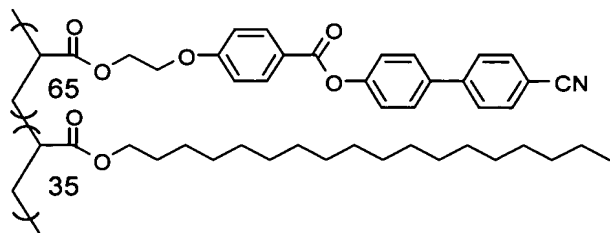
A mixed solution was obtained in a similar way to that in Example 1 with the exception that in Example 1, spherical fine particles (average diameter of 2 μm) of acrylic styrene with a refractive index of 1.51 were used instead of the liquid crystalline monomer and a mixture was prepared so that a mixing ratio of polyvinyl alcohol: the spherical fine particles is 100: 2 in weight. A mixed film was prepared in a similar way to that in Example 1 using the mixed solution. The obtained mixed film was wet stretched in a similar way to that in Example 1 to obtain a polarizer. $\Delta n^1 = 0.03$ and $\Delta n^2 = 0.01$ were obtained. It was confirmed that a desired anisotropic scattering was expressed.

Example 3

Prepared was an aqueous solution (1) having a solid matter concentration of 10 wt % containing 1000 parts of polyvinyl alcohol and 10 parts of a water-soluble absorption type dichroic

dye (trade name Congo Red, manufactured by KISHIDA CHEMICAL Co., Ltd.). Then, prepared was a toluene solution (2) having a solid matter concentration of 20 wt % and containing 30 parts of a liquid crystalline thermoplastic resin expressed by the following chemical formula (1). The aqueous solution (1) and the toluene solution (2) were mixed together with 3 parts of a surfactant (trade name of EMASOL L-10 manufactured by Kao Corporation.). The mixed solution was stirred with a homo-mixer and a film having a thickness of 70 μm was obtained with a solvent casting method. A film obtained after sufficient removal of both solvents by drying was uniaxially stretched at 120°C at a stretch ratio of 3 and thereafter, the stretched film is rapidly cooled to obtain a polarizer (film).

Chemical formula (1)



In the formula, wherein [65] and [35] express molar ratios and the formula was shown in block letters for convenience's sake.

Refractive indexes of the matrix and of the minute domains were separately measured respectively as in the case of example 1. An independent refractive index of the polyvinyl alcohol film stretched by a same stretching condition was

measured to obtain a refractive index =1.54 in the stretching direction (Δn^1 direction), and a refractive index of Δn^2 direction = 1.52. Moreover, the liquid crystalline monomer was measured for refractive indexes (n_e : extraordinary refractive index, and n_o : ordinary refractive index). A value n_e (equivalent to a refractive index in a Δn^1 direction) =1.720 and n_o (equivalent to a refractive index in a Δn^2 direction) =1.523 were obtained. Therefore, calculated results of $\Delta n^1 = 1.720 - 1.54 = 0.18$, $\Delta n^2 = 1.523 - 1.52 = 0.003$ were obtained.

The absorption axis of the dichroic dye almost coincided with the optical axis direction showing the Δn^1 direction. Sizes of the minute domains made of the liquid crystalline thermoplastic resin in dispersed state were measured by coloration caused by a phase contrast using a polarization microscope to thereby obtain an average length in a Δn^2 direction of 1 μm .

Comparative Example 1

A similar operation to that in Example 1 was performed with the exception that in Example 1, a film was prepared using a polyvinyl alcohol aqueous solution alone as it is. The obtained film was wet stretched in a similar way to that in Example 1 to obtain a polarizer.

Comparative Example 2

A similar operation to that in Example 1 was performed with

the exception that in Example 1, a film was prepared using an iodine-potassium iodide aqueous solution (having an iodine concentration of 0.05 wt % and a potassium iodide concentration of 0.35 wt %) instead of the dichroic dye aqueous solution. The obtained film was wet stretched in a similar way to that in Example 1 and a tone was adjusted using a potassium iodide aqueous solution in washing by water to obtain a polarizer.

(Evaluation)

Polarizers (sample) obtained in Examples and Comparative examples were measured for optical properties using a spectrophotometer with integrating sphere (manufactured by Hitachi Ltd. U-4100). Transmittance to each linearly polarized light (550nm) was measured under conditions in which a completely polarized light obtained through Glan Thompson prism polarizer was set as 100%.

A polarization degree P was calculated with an equation $P = \{(k_1 - k_2) / (k_1 + k_2)\} \times 100$. A transmittance T of a simple substance was calculated with an equation $T = (k_1 + k_2) / 2$.

In haze values, a haze value to a linearly polarized light in a maximum transmittance direction, and a haze value to a linearly polarized light in an absorption direction (a perpendicular direction). Measurement of a haze value was performed according to JIS K7136 (how to obtain a haze of plastics-transparent material), using a haze meter (manufactured

by Murakami Color Research Institute HM-150). A commercially available polarizing plate (NPF-SEG1224DU manufactured by NITTO DENKO CORP.: 43% of simple substance transmittances, 99.96% of polarization degree) was arranged on a plane of incident side of a measurement light of a sample, and stretching directions of the commercially available polarizing plate and the sample (polarizer) were made to perpendicularly intersect, and a haze value was measured. However, since quantity of light at the time of rectangular crossing is less than limitations of sensitivity of a detecting element when a light source of the commercially available haze meter is used, light by a halogen lamp which has high optical intensity provided separately was made to enter with a help of an optical fiber device, thereby quantity of light was set as inside of sensitivity of detection, and subsequently a shutter closing and opening motion was manually performed to obtain a haze value to be calculated.

A ratio of a backscattering strength to an incident light strength was measured. Note that a backscattering strength was obtained by measuring reflection with spectrophotometer with a 5° inclined integrating sphere (manufactured by Hitachi Ltd. U-4100). A black acrylic plate was adhered onto the rear surface of the sample with an acrylic-based pressure sensitive adhesive to thereby absorb all reflection on the rear surface and to measure only backward reflection and scattering strength from the front surface and inside of the sample.

In evaluation of unevenness, in a dark room, a sample (polarizer) was arranged on an upper surface of a backlight used for a liquid crystal display, furthermore, a commercially available polarizing plate (NPF-SEG1224DU by NITTO DENKO CORP.) was laminated as an analyzer so that a polarized light axis may intersect perpendicularly. And a level of the unevenness was visually observed on following criterion using the arrangement.

×: a level in which unevenness may visually be recognized

O: a level in which unevenness may not visually be recognized

In evaluation of heat resistance, triacetyl cellulose films (with a thickness of 80 μm) were adhered onto both surfaces of the polarizer using an aqueous adhesive and the composite was dried to prepare a polarizing plate. The polarizing plate was left as it is in an atmosphere at 120°C for one hour to visually evaluate a level of degradation with following criterion. Evaluation of polarization was performed by confirmation of a light transmission level and a hue in a case where two samples which are the same in specification as each other, were arranged so that the polarization axes are perpendicular to each other.

×: degradation of polarization performance after the test from that before the test can be visually recognized.

O : no degradation of polarization performance after the test from that before the test can be visually recognized.

Table 1

	Transmittance (%) of linearly polarized light		transmittance of a simple substance (%)	Polarization degree (%)	Haze values (%)		Ratio of backscattering strength (%)	Unevenness	Heat resistance
	Maximum transmission direction (k_1)	Perpendicular direction (k_2)			Maximum transmission direction	Perpendicular direction			
Example 1	83.0	0.74	41.8	98.2	1.8	62.0	4.5	○	○
Example 2	84.0	1.00	42.5	97.6	4.2	70.5	5.1	○	○
Example 3	80.0	1.17	40.6	97.1	5.3	70.2	4.3	○	○
Comparative example 1	83.2	1.70	42.5	96.0	0.3	0.2	4.1	×	○
Comparative example 2	87.0	0.04	44.3	99.9	1.7	62.0	4.3	○	×

As shown in Table 1, it is understood that in the dye-based polarizer of each of the examples, a Haze value of transmittance in the perpendicular direction is higher, and the unevenness due to disorder hidden by scattering, which disables the unevenness to be recognized, as compared with the dye-based polarizers of the comparative examples. It is also understood that the dye-based polarizer of each of the examples secures a heat resistance, which is a characteristic of dye-based polarizer, by comparison with Comparative example 2.

Then, each of the polarizing plates of Example 1 and Comparative Example 1 is actually mounted as replacement of a polarizing plate on the backlight side of a twisted nematic liquid crystal panel sold on the market. The level of unevenness in a black display on the liquid crystal panel was confirmed in a dark room, wherein in a case of mounting of the polarizing plate of Example 1, no unevenness is recognized at all and visibility was very good when in confirmation of a level of unevenness in a black display in a dark room as compared with a case of mounting of the polarizing plate of Comparative Example 1.

Since the obtained polarizer has the absorption dichroic dye present in matrix, an optical path length over which light passes through an absorption layer is longer; therefore, an effect of improving a polarization performance is larger than the polarizer described in JP-A No. 2002-207118. Furthermore, a production process is simpler.

As a polarizer having a similar structure as a structure of a polarizer of this invention, a polarizer in which a mixed phase of a liquid crystalline birefringent material and an absorption dichroic material is dispersed in a resin matrix is disclosed in JP-A No.2002-207118, whose effect is similar as that of this invention. However, as compared with a case where an absorption dichroic material exists in dispersed phase as in JP-A No.2002-207118, since in a case where an absorption dichroic material exists in a matrix layer as in this invention a longer optical path length may be realized by which a scattered polarized light passes absorption layer, more scattered light may be absorbed. Therefore, this invention may demonstrate much higher effect of improvement in light polarizing performance. This invention may be realized with simple manufacturing process.

An optical system to which a dichroic dye is added to either of continuous phase or dispersed phase is disclosed in JP-A No.2000-506990. A background of invention given in JP-A No.2000-506990 describes that optical property of a stretched film in which liquid droplets of a liquid crystal are arranged in a polymer matrix is indicated by Aphonin et al. However, Aphonin et al. has mentioned an optical film comprising a matrix phase and a dispersed phase (liquid crystal component), without using a dichroic dye, and since a liquid crystal component is not a liquid crystal polymer or a polymerized liquid crystalline monomer, a

liquid crystal component in the film concerned has a sensitive birefringence typically depending on temperatures. On the other hand, this invention provides a polarizer comprising a film having a structure where minute domains are dispersed in a matrix formed of a translucent thermoplastic resin including an absorption dichroic dye, furthermore, in a liquid crystalline material of this invention, in the case of a liquid crystal polymer, after it is orientated in a liquid crystal temperature range, cooled to room temperatures and thus orientation is fixed, in the case of a liquid crystalline monomer, similarly, after orientation, the orientation is fixed by ultraviolet curing etc., birefringence of minute domains formed by a liquid crystalline material does not change by the change of temperatures.

Industrial Applicability

The invention is useful as a polarizer, and a polarizing plate, and an optical film using the polarizer are preferably applicable to an image display such as a liquid crystal display, an organic EL (Electro-Luminescent) display, CRT and PDP (Plasma Display Panel).